United Nations

Centre against Apartheid

Notes and Documents

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PATRIOTIC/UNITED FRONT DECLARATION

(Durban, 27 October 1991)

[Note: This issue is published in pursuance of the United Nations Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, adopted by consensus by the General Assembly on 14 December 1989.

The Patriotic/United Front Declaration was adopted at the Patriotic/United Front Conference, held at Durban from 25 to 27 October 1991 with the participation of the African National Congress of South Africa, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and some 80 trade unions, teachers' federations, professional associations and women's, youth, church, civic and political groups.

Contained in the Annex is an agreement by the co-conveners of the Conference entitled "Joint Approach on a Constitutional Process with regard to Negotiations".]

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PATRIOTIC/UNITED FRONT DECLARATION

We, women and men,

Together as equals, assembled under the banners of political, labour, women's, religious, youth, professional, sports, cultural and business formations, as well as organizations of traditional leaders;

Experienced in diverse ways of engaging in the struggle against apartheid and minority rule;

Repositories of true democratic values and champions of human rights in our country gathered together in this Conference of the Patriotic/United Front at Durban from 25 to 27 October 1991;

Reaffirming our commitments to the establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, unfragmented and unitary country;

Recognizing that through struggle our country has reached a point where the transfer of power from the White minority regime to the people as a whole now is the most urgent necessity of struggle;

Convinced that the de Klerk regime cannot be, and is not, the agent of democratic change;

Resolving together to seize this moment in history to ensure the speedy establishment of national democracy;

Believing that a democratic order can only be ushered in through a mechanism in which our entire nation elects, by proportional representation on the basis of universal suffrage, a constituent assembly that drafts and adopts a democrtatic constitution, which shall constitute the basis for unifying our divided and tortured land around a common patriotism;

Recognizing that the de Klerk regime is illegal, illegitimate and totally discredited and does not enjoy the trust of our people, and that it has unilaterally embarked upon restructuring our economy and shaping our social life in order to perpetuate, in a new guise, the old social order based on White privilege and Black impoverishment;

Pledging ourselves to ensure that these designs shall be defeated and demanding that the regime cease such action forthwith and acknowledge that it has no right to take such measures unilaterally;

Committing ourselves to create the necessary mechanism to harmonize our approach to socio-economic transformation;

Condemning the introduction of value added tax (VAT) and calling upon all our people to support and participate fully in the national strike on 4 and 5 November 1991 and all other forms of united action on this and other issues;

Noting that de Klerk's constitutional proposals are intended to entrench minority privilege and the current power structure and represent nothing else but a dying order which seeks to give itself a veto power over the future of our country;

Noting further that the violence raging throughout our country today has been initiated and sponsored by the apartheid State, including the use of foreign mercenaries, and that it has the power to stop it, and demanding that it does so forthwith and that there should be the immediate and verifiable expulsion of all foreign mercenaries from our soil;

Calling upon our people to refuse to become tools of the regime, asserting our inherent desire for peace and taking all measures to contain and eliminate the violence which constitutes a prime obstacle to the establishment of a genuine democratic order;

Accordingly pledging to ensure that all peace initiatives, including the Peace Accord, aimed at assisting in securing peace among our people, are fully exploited at every level of our community;

Sharing the agony of those in sorrow over their dead and injured and searching for their lost ones, and concerned that the violence has rendered our women and children the main victims of the carnage;

Calling for the normalization of relations between our people and our traditional chiefs;

Committing ourselves, side by side with our people, to bring peace by all means at our disposal including helping in the creation of self defence units and embarking upon programmes to assist the victims of violence;

Now, therefore,

In order to ensure that elections to the constituent assembly are free and fair, we insist upon the establishment of an interim government/transitional authority to ensure that the de Klerk regime does not preside over or manipulate the transition through the misuse of its de facto control over State power and resources;

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Commit ourselves to a sovereign interim government/ transitional authority that shall, at the very least, control security forces and related matters, the electoral process, state media and defined areas of budget and finance, as well as secure international participation;

Demand the holding as soon as possible of an all-party congress/pre-constituent assembly meeting, which shall be brought together by independent and neutral covenors as a necessary mechanism to set into motion the process leading to a democratically elected constituent assembly which shall effect the transfer of power;

Confirm our common understanding that the all-party congress/pre-constituent assembly meeting shall underwrite the constitutional principles, find the modalities for drawing up the constitution through the constituent assembly, realize the establishment of the interim government/transitional authority, ensure the re-incorporation of the bantustans, define the role of the international community and agree upon the time-frame to bring about a democratic order;

Resolve further that the joint liaison committee established by the co-convenors of this Conference be maintained to facilitate post-Conference follow-up as well as look into ways and means, including the establishment of a consultative forum and the convening of a further Patriotic/United Front Conference within six months, of involving all the organizations gathered here today into closer consultation, joint action and drawing in of formations still outside this process;

Outraged at the failure of the regime to comply fully with the demand, endorsed by the whole international community for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and for general amnesty for all exiles;

Demand that the regime complies with these requirements forthwith and pledge to campaign for the immediate realization of these aims;

United by these common positions, maintaining our separate identities and independence, we assembled at this Patriotic/United Front Conference now therefore, separately and collectively, dedicate ourselves to intensify the struggle on every front and every terrain to realize, within the immediate future, a truly democratic order in which every individual is assured a place and a say as an equal and in which non-sexism, non-racialism and democratic majority rule shall be non-negotiable and be realized in practice;

To this end and acknowledging that there remain areas where consensus among us still needs to be reached, we pledge ourselves

to continue our search for united action and widening the areas of common understanding;

Call upon our people wherever they are to join and engage in this process emanating from our Conference to create a nation that will be at peace with itself.

Annex

JOINT APPROACH ON A CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS WITH REGARD TO NEGOTIATIONS

The Patriotic/United Front Conference, held at Durban, South Africa, from 25 to 27 October 1991 agrees:

1. TRANSFER OF POWER

The transfer of power from the minority regime to the people is the main objective of our struggle. In pursuance of this objective an all-party conference/pre-constituent assembly meeting will have to be convened as soon as possible.

2. PURPOSE OF THE ALL-PARTY CONGRESS/PRE-CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MEETING

The purpose of the all-party congress/pre-constituent assembly meeting would be to work out modalities of transferring power to the people. The modalities must centre around: the establishment of an elected consitutional assembly based on one-person, one-vote, with all eligible voters voting on a common voters' roll; constitutional principles within the framework outlined in the United Nations/Organization of African Unity declarations; interim government/transitional authority; the role of the international community; re-incorporation of the bantustans and a definite time-frame.

3. CONVENORSHIP

3.1 The all-party congress/pre-constituent assembly meeting must be convened by an independent and neutral convenor, and not the regime. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and the African National Congress of South Africa must agree on an acceptable convenor.

3.2 A meeting with the regime and other interested parties should be held within the next few weeks to discuss the date, venue and an independent convenor for the all-party congress/pre-constituent assembly meeting.

4. APPROACH TO PROCESS

4.1 On issues where there is agreement at this or future meetings of the Patriotic/United Front, actions and positions will be underlined by the principle of unity in action and unity of purpose as a front. On issues where consensus has not been reached, endeavours to find common ground will continue. Should consensus not be reached, organizations can act independently.

4.2 The Patriotic/United Front shall be reconvened after six months for the purposes of reporting and further consultations and joint planning.